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ABSTRACT

This paper presents an evaluation of the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) Program, an integral part of the fifth grade curriculum in 84 elementary schools in the Broward County (Florida) Public Schools. During the 1992-93 school year, nearly 12,000 fifth grade students attended DARE classes taught by 43 trained law enforcement officers. Attitudinal and informational questionnaires, designed to assess the effectiveness of DARE and to determine program costs to law enforcement agencies, were completed by students, parents, teachers, principals, officer/instructors, and law enforcement supervisors. Survey results show that: (1) DARE is popular as judged by all respondent groups; (2) all supervisors indicated that positive public relations between youth and police were worth costs incurred by law enforcement agencies; and (3) officers were enthusiastic about their role indicating that the training, teaching, and extra time spent were rewarded by students' increased drug awareness. A positive attitude towards police officers was a side-effect of DARE. Nearly all student respondents indicated that they had learned a lot, liked the officers, and wished the program was longer. Over 94 percent of the 110 parents (58% of all parents) who answered the questionnaires felt that DARE was good for their children. (LL)

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ED 365 652

THE SCHOOL BOARD OF BROWARD COUNTY, FLORIDA

EVALUATION REPORT

DRUG ABUSE RESISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAM (DARE)

June, 1993

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E.) program was developed in 1983 by Dr. Ruth Rich of the Los Angeles Unified School District. The purpose of DARE is to prevent drug use by informing students of the alternatives to drugs; by teaching students to recognize and resist pressures which promote drug abuse; by building self-esteem; and by developing interpersonal, communication and decision-making skills. Currently there are DARE programs in every state in the United States, in other countries (Canada, England, Australia, and New Zealand), and in many reservation schools operated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Materials are available in Spanish and in Braille. They are currently being developed for hearing impaired and special needs students.

In 1988-89,Broward County Public Schools, Florida piloted DARE in five schools. This year the program has become an integral part of the fifth grade curriculum in eighty-four of our elementary schools. During 1992-93 nearly 12,000 fifth grade students attended DARE classes for approximately forty-five minutes to an hour a week for seventeen weeks. The classes were taught by forty-three trained law enforcement officers from the Broward County Sheriff's Department and 17 municipalities throughout Broward County. In a cooperative effort, community leaders, principals, police officers, teachers, parents, and students successfully participated in promoting the idea, through the DARE program, that drug abuse resistance education at the elementary school level was critical for the future welfare of Broward County residents.

In Broward County Public Schools, DARE is implemented as a supplement to the existing approved substance abuse curriculum called Someone Super Special. In addition to resisting drug abuse, DARE lessons include personal safety, ways to say "no," managing stress, use of leisure time, choosing friends, and risk-taking. The course terminates with a Culmination Activity. This activity involves an assembly or other event in which students receive awards for essays, participation, and projects. Skits are also demonstrated to classmates, teachers, parents, and school and community members.

This evaluation design was that of survey research, and the questionnaire was the tool for data collection in obtaining answers to the following questions:

1. How effective is DARE from a student's perspective?
2. How effective is DARE from a parent's perspective?
3. How effective is DARE from a teacher's perspective?
4. How effective is DARE from a principal's perspective?
5. How effective is DARE from an officer/instructor's perspective?
6. How effective is DARE from a law enforcement supervisor's perspective?
7. What is the cost of DARE to the law enforcement agencies?

The procedures included designing attitudinal/informational questionnaires for the various involved groups: students, parents, teachers, principals, officers, and supervisors. Interviews were conducted with two DARE officers, one DARE supervisor and one principal to gain insight as to appropriate survey questions. Two district level administrators were interviewed in order to better understand the relationship of DARE to the Someone Super Special and ME-ology programs. A DARE Culmination Activity was observed. Questions for parents, students, and teachers were designed to elicit responses that could parallel the objectives of DARE.

All DARE supervisors, DARE officers and principals of schools offering DARE were included in the survey group. Twenty-three schools representing a range of geographic and socio-economic groups were selected in order to identify a stratified random sample of 230 students and their parents. The DARE teachers of the twenty-three schools were given surveys also.

Findings. The results of the surveys show that DARE is popular as judged by all groups which responded. All supervisors indicated that the positive public relations between youth and police was worth the cost incurred by the law enforcement agencies. The DARE officers were enthusiastic about their role and indicated that the training, teaching, and extra time spent were rewarded by the students' increased drug awareness. Interestingly, a positive attitude towards police officers was a side-effect of DARE. Nearly all student respondents indicated that they learned a lot, liked the officers, and wished that the program was longer. Over 94% of parents who answered the questionnaires felt that DARE was good for their children.

INTRODUCTION

The Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) program is a joint venture between the School Board of Broward County, Florida and eighteen law enforcement agencies throughout the county. The program is described as a drug prevention program aimed at providing information and strategies to resist drug use, while improving self-esteem and developing interpersonal, communication, and decision-making skills. Originally developed as a cooperative effort between the Los Angeles Police Department and the Los Angeles Unified School District in 1983, it is now offered in every state in the United States, in other countries (Canada, England, Australia, and New Zealand), and in many reservation schools operated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Materials are available in Spanish and in Braille. They are being developed for hearing impaired and special needs students.

Upon approval of the School Board of Broward County in 1988-89, the DARE program was officially piloted in five schools. By 1992-93, the prescribed DARE curriculum was taught by forty-three specially trained uniformed police officers in eighty-four elementary schools throughout the district.

The major cost of the DARE officer is absorbed by the municipality/law enforcement agency, and as reported by individual law enforcement supervisors, can run between $30,000 and $50,000 per officer depending on the number of schools the officer serves. In one municipality where the DARE officer is also the SRO (School Resource Officer) a small portion of the officer's salary is paid for out of the school's budget, however, this cost is not directly attributed to the DARE program.

These officers usually volunteer for DARE and attend a rigorous two-week, eighty hour training session. The cost of the training varies but usually ranges from $800-$3,000 per officer. Officers may attend state or national conferences after the initial training, but no formal scheduled training is required.

The primary supervisor of the DARE officer is an employee of the law enforcement agency or municipality. In addition, there is a School Board liaison from Special Investigative Unit (SIU) who works with the supervisors and officers; attends meetings; and maintains a list of DARE officers and their schools, the teachers of the fifth grade students in those schools, the training schedule, and the number of students served .

DARE classes are scheduled for fifth grade students once a week for seventeen weeks and can be from 45-60 minutes in length. The primary objectives of DARE, taken directly from the lessons contained in the 1987 edition of the DARE Officers Guide for Grades 5-6, include the following:

1. demonstrate awareness of the need for laws and rules to protect people and keep them safe
2. relate the harmful effects that may result from the misuse of drugs
3. identify consequences of using and choosing not to use alcohol and marijuana
4. resist the pressure of a drug offer
5. demonstrate effective ways to say no in response to different kinds of peer pressure to use drugs
6. recognize positive qualities about themselves
7. respond assertively in refusing offers to use drugs
8. identify stressors in their lives
9. recognize and analyze influencing factors in media presentations about alcohol and drugs
10. apply decision-making skills in evaluating the risks in situations involving drug use
11. find out about activities that are interesting and rewarding
12. identify ways that older students and famous people can discourage the use of drugs among youth
13. develop positive relationships with many different people in order to form a support system
14. identify situations in which they may be pressured by gangs and to evaluate the consequences of the choices available to them
15. suggest appropriate responses for dealing with and resisting pressures to use drugs
16. complete and read aloud scripts telling how they can respond when they are pressured to use drugs
17. Culmination Activity.

All students take a pre- and post-competency based assessment. Teaching strategies include positive acceptance to promote participation. Students complete workbook assignments, practice role-playing, write essays, design posters, and attend field trips to meet DARE objectives. Occasionally, guest speakers are featured. DARE materials such as rulers, key chains and stickers are used to promote awareness of the program throughout the school and community, and are also presented as reinforcement for achievement. Scheduling of DARE classes within a school is a cooperative effort on the part of the principal, fifth grade teachers, and officers.

METHODOLOGY

Due to the fact that the last formal evaluation of DARE was conducted in May of 1989, and with the realization that the program has grown significantly from five pilot schools to eighty-four elementary schools, this descriptive research design was implemented during May of 1993.

Initially, current DARE literature, curriculum materials, and research reports were perused to gain an understanding of DARE and its history within the district. The pilot study was reviewed. The current needs warranted a focus on the budgetary impact of DARE to the municipalities and/or law enforcement agencies, and the effectiveness of DARE as perceived by students, parents, teachers, principals, officers, and supervisors. In addition, attention was given to the responses for recommended improvements to the program, as it has now been in place for several years.

The purpose of this evaluation was to ascertain answers to the following key evaluation questions:

1. How effective is DARE from a student's perspective?
2. How effective is DARE from a parent's perspective?
3. How effective is DARE from a teacher's perspective?
4. How effective is DARE from a principal's perspective?
5. How effective is DARE from an officer/instructor's perspective?
6. How effective is DARE from a law enforcement supervisor's perspective?
7. What is the cost of DARE to the law enforcement agencies?

Questionnaires were constructed following preliminary interviews with Broward County Public Schools district administrators, an elementary principal, two DARE officers, and a DARE supervisor. The information gathered provided the framework from which to construct the questionnaires. Lists of participating schools, officers, and supervisors were obtained from a representative of the Special Investigative Unit (SIU) of the School Board of Broward County.

In the case of the student questionnaire, it is the same as that utilized in lesson fifteen of the DARE curriculum. The purpose of this lesson is to "help students summarize and assess what they learned from participating in Project DARE." Parent questionnaires allowed for a measurement of parent involvement and perceptions, while adding another dimension --- that of parent/child communication regarding DARE. Officer, supervisor, teacher, and principal questionnaires were developed while keeping in mind the role of each of these individuals within the DARE Program.

In order to obtain a representative sample of participating fifth grade students and their parents, twenty-three of the eighty-four DARE schools were selected according to both geographic and socio-economic stratification. A stratified random sample of 230 students and their parents, as well as 120 DARE teachers, was generated. All principals of the DARE participating schools were given questionnaires. All forty-three DARE officers and all eighteen supervisors were sent surveys.

The results were tallied and analyzed, and are highlighted in the next section of this evaluative report.

DARE PRINCIPAL SURVEY RESULTS

Of the eighty-four principals surveyed, 65 responded. A majority of the schools had participated in the DARE Program for 3 or more years. All principals said they would continue to offer DARE as part of the fifth grade curriculum next year.

According to the principals, the impact on the school's budget was non-existent or of little consequence. In one municipality where the DARE instructor was also the School Resource Officer part of the officer's salary was paid by the school. However, this impact was not directly related to DARE program costs. In the fall of 1992, the Broward County Commission on Substance Abuse requested and received $200,000 from the Children's Service Board (CSB) to help defray the cost of the DARE materials.

Most principals said that the rationale to offer DARE stemmed from the need to educate children about drugs at an early age, in that DARE taught them "strategies and techniques to cope with drug pressure," before they were exposed to drugs. They further indicated that their role as principal was one of liaison, coordinator, motivator, leader, and facilitator, but overall, one of support. Principals used various media techniques to involve parents and the community in the DARE curriculum concept. These included newsletters; speakers at PTA and Advisory meetings, Open House, Career Day, and orientation programs; volunteers; awards programs; needs assessments; assemblies; and graduation ceremonies for DARE. At one school all DARE students participated in a PTA sponsored Safety Fair.

Teachers were informed of DARE and its objectives through orientation by DARE officers, guidance counselors, and administrators. The teachers assisted in planning activities and scheduling classes. They were given information at faculty meetings and inservice sessions. These activities fulfilled the requirement of Florida Statute 233.0663 Drug Abuse Resistance Education Program, Section (3) subsection (f),

> "Each classroom teacher whose students will receive DARE program instruction shall participate in an orientation session to become familiar with the concept of the DARE Program." (See Appendix D for copy of Florida Statute 233.0663 (3) (f).)

As for improvements to DARE, slightly more than half of the principals stated none were necessary. However a few principals suggested expanding the program to other grades, updating training for officers as needed, and maintaining the DARE schedule.

Benefits to the school from the principal's perspective included the increased positive perceptions of the police officers" and "improved cooperation among agencies to confront societal problems." Further they felt that students learned alternatives to drug use including societal influences, self-esteem and assertiveness. One principal added that DARE provided "...heightened awareness of drugs, gangs, propaganda...from another perspective --- the police officer on the street." These kinds of comments summarized the feelings of all principal respondents, who were most enthusiastic and supportive of the DARE program.

DARE TEACHER SURVEY RESULTS

Of the 120 teachers surveyed, 80 (67%) responded. Eighty-nine percent of the teachers reported that they had been informed about DARE prior to its inception. When asked the question "What are the positive effects of DARE on your fifth grade students in regard to improvements in the following areas, the teachers reported provided strategies for resisting drugs/gangs (94%) ," learned decision making skills (89%), taught personal safety (78%)," and resulted in an improved self-esteem in their students (74%). Nearly all teachers added that the DARE program "fostered a positive relationship of the students with a police officer."

When teachers were asked if they related DARE to the existing curriculum, 93% said they did, however, only 23% spent time planning with the officer. One teacher comment reflected the sentiment of several teachers: "add speakers such as undercover policemen who counsel gang members ... too many teachers are out of touch..." Teachers stated that open communication between them and the officer was necessary for the continued success of the program.

As for improvements, the need for audio-visual materials to augment the DARE curriculum was cited, but the most common concern was the need for the officer to teach as scheduled without interruption. It seems that the teachers would like the officer to adhere to the pre-planned schedule and not be interrupted by other duties or obligations. An experienced DARE teacher, when asked about program improvements, responded, "None. In the four years I have been involved in DARE, this was the most exciting and rewarding program...." Another teacher wrote, "DARE is great as it is. It has helped my class tremendously, especially in dealing with peer pressure." The results of the questionnaire clearly showed a belief in DARE on the part of the fifth grade teachers.

SUPERVISOR SURVEY RESULTS

Fourteen of the eighteen DARE Supervisors who were mailed questionnaires responded to the survey. Most estimates on the impact of DARE to their budgets were based on the cost of the officer's salary, vehicle, and DARE materials and training. The total cost per officer ranged from $30,000-$50,000 per year, depending on the years of experience of the officer, and whether or not the

DARE training was offered locally or out-of-state. The Broward Sheriff's Office, which will provide DARE in 26 elementary schools during 1993-94, has estimated the cost to be approximately $660,000.

Of the fourteen supervisors who responded, one reported being in the planning stages to provide a DARE officer to a new school that will open in the fall, so no data was available from that city. The majority of the DARE officers had volunteered for the program, but two were assigned, several other officers were selected by other means such as competitive interviews.

Most supervisors answered that they had four DARE officers in the field, while six municipalities had two or more trained DARE officers in their departments. This suggests a strong commitment to DARE and the school system on the part of the various law enforcement agencies throughout Broward County.

All supervisors indicated that they would be participating in DARE next year, and the similar remarks as to the positive effect of DARE on their departments could be summarized in this quote, "A major benefit of DARE is more productive drug free students and a breakdown of barriers and myths about police officers." The underlying premise of this quote was emphasized by every supervisor. All felt that the positive interaction of the elementary school children with the DARE police officers not only would prevent the increase of drug problems in neighborhoods, but also would reduce the "ripple effects of drug related crimes in the communities."

The supervisor responses demonstrate their support for DARE. The law enforcement agencies espouse a commitment to teach drug abuse resistance in public schools, and are willing to accept the financial responsibility incurred by DARE.

DARE OFFICER SURVEY RESULTS

Of the forty-three trained DARE officers, twenty-four (56%) returned the questionnaires. Twenty-three (96%) of the respondents had been a police officer for five or more years, while one had been on the force for four years. Therefore, all DARE officers were considered to be experienced officers. Six (25%) had taught DARE for one year, five others had taught for two years, nine (37%) had taught for three years, three had taught for four years, and one had taught for five or more years. Nine (37%) of the twenty-four were School Resource Officers (SROs) in addition to being the DARE instructor.

All the officers had received the special 80 hour training to become a DARE officer. The training is paid for by the officers' municipality. Fourteen of the officers had received training in 1990 or thereafter, but only seven of all the officers had been "updated" since the initial training. This lack of retraining or recency of training was cited by most officers as an area of DARE needing

improvement. They also needed more current curriculum materials, especially audio-visual products.

The average number of hours per week spent in DARE activities was seven hours during the workday, and the extra time spent per week averaged at three hours beyond the workday. A few officers were directly involved as little as four hours per week, while on the other extreme, two officers spent the whole week with DARE or DARE related activities. These large discrepancies were due to the number of schools assigned, and therefore, students served by one officer. The average number of fifth grade students with whom each officer worked was 400 if all public schools offering DARE were taken into account.

Some of the officer innovations to the DARE curriculum include the addition of more skits, group discussions, and chalkboard activities, the use of current events to stimulate discussion, and a DARE definition word game. One officer invited an ex-gang member to tell the class the consequences of gangs, while another officer demonstrated one new piece of police equipment or addition to the police safety program to his classes. Everyday examples of drug issues, actually encountered by officers at work, were presented by an officer, and a graduation luncheon was organized by another officer.

When asked the question of "How do you know DARE is effective?" the officers provided anecdotes such as the following:

- "Several students quit smoking."
- "Remarks from parents whose children still talk about what they learned in DARE."
- "Students seen at middle school and on the street tell me they are drug free."
- "Past students still talk with me and younger ones ask me about DARE."
- "In April, a mother of a DARE student called and said her son and his friend got out of a drug offer situation on their way home from school because of DARE training."
- "Parents call to say students won't miss school on DARE day."
- "Children in middle school return to say thank you for DARE."
- "Parents participate at graduation and students are proud to wear their DARE shirts and display their DARE awards."
- "Letters and notes from students."
- "Students make better grades and have better self-esteem."
- "Student attitudes towards police have improved."

When asked what improvements should be made, the officers responded with several suggestions. Many officers felt that follow-up should be a part of the middle and/or high school programs such as Gang Resistance Education and Training. Other comments included the need to update curriculum, provide

training to officers, to make National DARE Day a countywide event, and to have more networking among the trained DARE officers. One officer requested that teacher support of the program be solicited to ensure that students are receiving the same message from their instructors.

In essence, the DARE police officers were diligent in their mission to teach DARE. They related feelings of personal satisfaction with the job, felt that they were making a difference in the lives of the students, and were committed to the goals and objectives of DARE.

DARE STUDENT SURVEY RESPONSES

The survey questions given to 230 students were the same questions given to them by the officers at the end of the DARE program. Of the 110 (58%) surveys returned, the three most important concepts learned were as follows:

1. How " to say no" to drugs. (55%)
2. Information received about drugs (41%)
3. Resisting peer pressure/exercising self-control (34%)

In addition, they said they learned about the importance of an education and to choose friends wisely. Approximately 10% used the words better "self-esteem" as an important part of the DARE class.

Approximately half of the students reported liking the activities: role playing, field trips, essays and poster making, guest speakers and graduation. Twenty-two percent of the students wrote about personal growth and the relationship with the officer as being the best part of DARE. I like best .... is being with the officer." "It taught me to stand up for what is right and to be drug free and confident." "It is when she made us have confidence in ourselves." "It told me about what drugs can do and helped me understand that I shouldn't use drugs." "You can learn more about your life." "I liked the officer best because she taught me not to be afraid to stand up and say no."

Pertinent and realistic information provided by the DARE officer was listed by 23% of the students as what they liked best. They mentioned seeing what drug dealers use and the different drugs as very important. "You learn about the different drugs and what they do to you." "...knowing that I was a fifth grader in a smoke free class of 2000." "It dealed with realistic situations." The materials and gifts such as T-shirts, bumper stickers, key chains, rulers, water bottles, etc. were what 16 % of the students liked best, and 9% of the students liked the discussions best.

As far as what students liked <u>least</u>, only a few responded to the item including statements addressing tasks such as writing an essay or making a speech or completing the workbook. The vast majority of the students said they liked

everything or "That we had to end DARE," or that "I wish the DARE program was all year," or "There's not enough time for the DARE box," or "That it only comes once a week." Individual students reported disliking when DARE lessons impacted speech class or completion of classwork.

It is necessary to note that over one fifth of the participants valued the interaction with the police officer. This gives credence to the perception of the officers and the supervisors that the image of law enforcement officers is improved by DARE. It is obvious from the student survey responses that students enjoy DARE and look forward to it as part of the curriculum.

DARE PARENT SURVEY RESULTS

Two hundred and thirty parents were given questionnaires and 105 (46%) responded. Most parents (86%) report that their child talks with them about what he/she learned from the DARE officer and that the DARE program has helped their child (90%). However, only a few (20%) parents reported meeting the DARE officer. It can be inferred that DARE is an impetus for parent-child interaction, and that the program is effective in imparting information that is retained and shared.

CONCLUSION

The DARE program is perceived positively by a vast majority of respondents in the evaluation, and its popularity is evidenced by continued growth throughout the elementary schools in Broward County. DARE is enthusiastically supported by the administrators, participants, and especially by the representatives of municipalities, which bear the largest financial impact. DARE provides drug abuse resistance education which is a preferred course of action when compared to the long range outcome of substance abuse ignorance; education is less expensive than rehabilitation. It was recently learned that grant money, in the amount of $200,000 per year for the 1993-94 and 1994-95 school years has been committed to DARE by the Children's Services Board.

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